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ABSTRACT

Five exercises based on a sample school dress code were designed from a political science perspective to help students develop skills in analyzing issues. The exercises are intended to be used in five or more class periods. In the first exercise, students read a sample dress code and name groups of people who might have opinions about it. In subsequent exercises, students are given a list of seven groups: students, parents, teachers, school administrators, school board members, clergy, and employers. They decide how each group would probably react to four sections of the dress code: length of students' hair, wearing of shoes, appropriate upper body clothing, and the use of face paint. The exercises help students recognize varying degrees of opinions and how opinions affect an issue. A survey dealing with the students' own dress code is included. (BY)

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ANALYZING A SCHOOL DRESS CODE

IN A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL:

A SET OF EXERCISES

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NOTE: This exercise was developed as a part of the University of Kentucky
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TO THE TEACHER:

This set of exercises is designed to demonstrate to the students that various groups of people outside of the school have differing views on the issue of a school dress code.

Students often think of a conflict as having only one proper resolution --the one they believe to be correct. There is a need to demonstrate to the students the value of examining the positions and concerns of those groups holding different views than their own as a means to better understand the process of making decisions (as it relates to the dress code issue). These exercises will show the students the difficulties that arise when attempting to reach a decision on the dress code issue because various groups involved may hold a wide range of views.

There are five exercises in this unit. This includes four classroom-type exercises and a fifth exercise that is a survey the students can conduct to find out students' attitudes on the school dress code. It is suggested that a minimum of five periods be used - more if the survey is done.

The unit is designed so that it can work in schools where the dress code is an issue; under these conditions we would expect the teacher to revise and adapt the exercises to take advantage of the particular aspects of the local situation. However, by including the sample dress code, we hope that this will make it possible for the teacher to use the unit in schools where the dress code issue is not a burning issue. But we have operated on the assumption that students will be interested in this issue and that it will stimulate them.

SOME POLITICAL ANALYSIS POSSIBILITIES:

This unit has been designed from the perspective of political science. Our purpose is to help students develop skills in analyzing the political aspects of public issues. This set of skills can be used by the student throughout life. Some of the types of skills and political insights that can be demonstrated by using this unit are the following:

- Recognizing the many different positions that individuals and groups often take on public issues. There is almost never a clear answer or solution to a problem; most if not all alternative positions on an issue have some merit
- Public issues involve (or are of interest to) many different groups. Knowing who these groups are and what their positions are will usually help you to understand the issue better. Furthermore, the information about groups and their positions on issues is useful political information for those trying to influence the outcome of decisions about public issues.
- Public issues are complex - being comprised of different, distinguishable aspects. It is often helpful to break these separate aspects of an issue out and examine them individually. Also, this helps to see the various dimensions that may be at work as the issue is being debated.

- Different aspects of political issues are more salient to some people and groups than to others. Not everybody feels the same way about all aspects of an issue. Again, knowing how groups feel about different aspects of an issue makes it possible to propose compromises and to bring about decisions by acting on the fact that groups will "give in" on certain issues but not on others.

- Planning political strategy can be done most effectively when one uses information about aspects of an issue, how various groups feel about the aspects, and how strongly they feel about them.

- In general, information is a crucial political resource. The more we know about a public issue, then the better we understand it and the more effectively we can take action on it.

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EXERCISE 1: Examining a Dress Code and the Groups Who Might Be Interested In It.

This first exercise presents an actual school dress code to the students. (It is the Bourbon County School System code adopted November 7, 1974) Divide the class into teams of 5-7 students. Give them a copy of the dress code (Handout I-A) and ask them to read it and answer a set of questions (Handout I-B) as they discuss the dress code in their teams. The questions are designed to aid the students in identifying various groups in the community who might be interested in, and involved in adopting a school dress code. They are also asked to consider the varying views the groups may have toward a school dress code.

Handout I-A

A SAMPLE DRESS CODE

I. Purpose

The purpose of this code is to provide the students, parents, faculty, and administrators of the Monterey School system with guidelines as to the standards of dress expected in the Monterey Schools. The standards set forth, herein, are based upon accepted standards of decency, morality, style, safety, and cleanliness, that presently exist in the Monterey community.

II. Dress Regulations

The following requirements are applicable to both male and female students except where indicated:

A. Hair - All students are encourage to have a hair style that is not distracting or "freakish" and is in conformance with accepted standards. Hair should be kept clean, neat, and well groomed at all times.

- (1) For those students attending vocational school, shop classes, or any other course of instruction where the length of hair may constitute a safety hazard, the instructor will be the judge as to what length is acceptable or what precautions (i.e., use of nets, hats, etc.) will be required. Failure to comply with the standing requirements will be sufficient grounds for elimination of students from that course-of-instruction.
- (2) Students participating in specialized courses of instruction or athletic activities where the instructor requires definite hair lengths or styles in order to properly pursue the objectives of the course will conform to requirement or choose an alternate activity.
- (3) Students will not wear hats or other forms of haircovering in school buildings.

B. Clothing - Students are encouraged to dress in clothes that are clean, simple-in-style, and comfortable. Extremes in style, and color are distracting to both faculty and other students and are not conducive to a favorable classroom atmosphere.

- (1) Dress styles that do not cover the waist area (bare midriff, halters, "short-shirt", etc.) are not permitted.
- (2) All garments will be of a type material that will prevent the exposure of undergarments or the human anatomy that they are intended to cover (i.e., "see-through" blouses, open-knit shirts, etc.)

Dress Code (continued)

- (3) *Female students will wear bras.
- (4) *Students will not wear shorts.
- (5) *Male students will not wear sleeveless shirts or outer-garments that expose the armpits (i.e., tanktops, muscle shirts, undershirts, etc.)
- (6) All students will wear shoes.

C. Jewelry - Students are encouraged to wear a minimum of jewelry. Care should be taken that all jewelry worn is not hazardous to wearer or other persons coming in contact with the item (i.e., long earrings that may be caught, sharp pendants, rings, brooches, etc.) Jewelry or slogans on clothing that are offensive to a person's race, creed, color, or national origin, or are contrary to normal standards of good ethics, will not be permitted.

III. Enforcement

The policies and requirements set forth in this dress code are based upon recommendations and considerations of parents, students, faculty, and administrators of the Monterey School System. The adoption of this code and its implementation is intended solely for a more efficient and harmoniously operated school system. It is expected that all personnel affected by this code will conform to the requirements listed herein and that all personnel charged with its enforcement will make immediate and appropriate corrections when and where necessary. Problems that arise in areas not specifically covered in the listed guidelines, will be the responsibility of the school principal. He will make appropriate decisions based upon the general policies of this code, the Monterey Board of Education, Kentucky laws, and the standards of the community.

*Does not apply to grades K-6.

Handout I-B

WHAT GROUPS ARE INTERESTED IN A DRESS CODE?

As you discuss the school dress code (Handout I-A), answer the following questions:

A. What groups of people in the school system would be interested in the school's dress code?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Others:

B. What groups of people outside of the school system might also be interested in the school's dress code?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Others:

C. What groups might favor the school adopting this dress code? Why?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

D. What groups might oppose this dress code? Why?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

E. How should the school decide whether or not it should have this dress code, given all the different groups and their different views?

F. Which group is likely to have the most influence in writing a dress code? Do you feel that all groups should have equal influence in this decision, or should some groups have more than others?

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EXERCISE 2: What Bugs Us the Most? An Examination of the Dress Code to Determine Which Sections Are of Most Concern to Students.

The purpose of this exercise is to get the students to realize that a dress code is made up of many different sections and that they may feel differently about these sections. Begin again with Handout I-A, the sample dress code, and have the students find from 6 to 10 items that are referred to by the dress code. These items will be listed by the students in Part One of Handout II-A.

After the students have listed their items from the dress code, let them discuss why they think those things were forbidden. After an appropriate discussion of this question, then have the students indicate in Part Two (a) which item in the dress code they feel most strongly about and then (b) which item they feel least strongly about. Ask various students to discuss their answers. The purpose is to demonstrate that students do not feel equally strongly about all sections of the dress code. It may also show that the students favor some section while opposing others.

To complete this exercise, we ask the students in Part Three to consider a new situation that is not explicitly covered by the dress code - face paint, which is the make-up being worn by many so-called "punk" rock groups. The discussion of this question is likely to focus on two types of issues: (1) should face paint be forbidden in school, and (2) can face paint be banned under the present code, and if so, by whom? (For example, face paint might come under part I of the code--"accepted standards of decency ...and style"; or under part III--"Problems that arise in areas not specifically covered...")

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HANDOUT II-A

Part One

Instructions: Look again at the sample dress code, Handout I-A.

List from 6 to 10 things that are covered in the sample dress code

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

Part Two

1. Which item in the dress code do you feel most strongly about - either in favor of it or opposed to it?
2. Which item in the dress code do you feel least strongly about?

Part ThreeFor Class Discussion:

"Is the wearing of face paint covered by the sample dress code?"

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EXERCISE 3: Who Are Our Allies and Our Enemies? How Different Groups Feel About Sections of the Dress Code?

In this exercise, the students are to indicate how various groups in the school and the community are likely to feel about four different sections of a dress code that is being considered by the school board:

- (a) limiting the length of a person's hair
- (b) requiring the wearing of shoes in school
- (c) banning the wearing of certain types of upper body clothing (bare midriffs, cut-offs, etc.)
- (d) banning the wearing of face paint

The exercise should show that different groups feel differently about different sections of a dress code. For example, students may feel more strongly about the hair questions whereas parents and administrators may feel more strongly about upper body clothing.

Students will be asked to indicate the views of seven different groups of persons who might be interested in the dress code:

- 1) Students
- 2) Parents
- 3) School teachers
- 4) School Administrators
- 5) School board members
- 6) Clergy in the community
- 7) Employers-managers (i.e., persons working in situations where dress codes do exist -- restaurants, banks, department stores, military, etc.)

The class is divided into four teams of 5 to 7 students each, and Handout III-A is passed out. The students in each team will be asked to indicate what they think the response of each of the seven groups would be to one of the following questions (The teacher should probably assign each team one of the questions to work with):

- A. Would this group favor or oppose a section in the dress code that limits the length of a person's hair?
- B. Would this group favor or oppose a section in the dress code that requires wearing shoes in school?
- C. Would this group favor or oppose a section in the dress code that bans the wearing of certain types of upper body clothing, e.g., bare midriffs, tank tops, cut-off T-shirts?
- D. Would this group favor or oppose a section in the dress code that bans the wearing of face paint similar to that being worn by some rock group?

EXERCISE 3

Page 2

TO THE TEACHER:

Note that in Handout III-A, the student teams are eventually asked to indicate two things in Table X: (1) whether they think the group favors or opposes the section and (2) how strongly the group feels for or against the section. These things should be done separately, starting with indicating Favor or Oppose.

After indicating in column 1 of Table X in Handout III-A whether each of the seven groups is likely to favor or oppose a section of the code, then the students are asked to indicate how strongly that group is likely feel about that section by writing in column 2 either "Strongly," "Moderately," or "Mildly."

At the end of Exercise 3, the various teams should have indicated how they feel each of the seven groups feels about one section of the dress code. It might be helpful to end the session by asking a person from each of the teams to report to the class on what their team decided.

HANDOUT III-A

HOW VARIOUS GROUPS ARE LIKELY TO FEEL ABOUT A
SECTION OF THE SCHOOL DRESS CODE

Instructions: You are to work in teams. Each team will be assigned one of the following questions to work on (See questions A-D). Circle the question your team will be working on.

The task of your team is to indicate in Table X how you think each of seven groups of people - students, teachers, clergy, etc. - are likely to feel about the question you are working with.

First you are to indicate whether you feel the groups would favor or oppose that section of the dress code. Write either "favor" or "oppose" in the appropriate box in column 1 of Table X.

Next you are to indicate how strongly you think each group feels about that section. Write either "Strongly," "Moderately," or "Mildly" in column 2.

Questions:

- A. Would this group favor or oppose a section in the dress code that limits the length of a persons hair?
- B. Would this group favor or oppose a section in the dress code that requires wearing shoes in school?
- C. Would this group favor or oppose a section the dress code that bans the wearing of certain types of upper body clothing, e.g., bare midriffs, tank tops, muscle shirts?
- D. Would this group favor or oppose a section in the dress code that bans the wearing of face paint (similar to that being worn by some rock groups)?

NOW TURN TO TABLE X AND FILL IN BOXES

Handout III-A

Table X

(Circle One)

How groups in the community are likely to feel about a section in the School Dress Code dealing with:

- a. hair length
- b. wearing shoes
- c. upper body clothing
- d. face paint

Fill in the boxes

Column 1

Column 2

Groups	Oppose or Favor the Section	How Strongly, Moderately, or Mildly do they feel
Student		
Parents		
School Teachers		
School Administrator		
Clergy in the Community		
Employers-Managers i.e., persons working where dress code exist, res- taurants, banks, etc.		

EXERCISE 4: Who's Gonna Win What? Planning Strategy

In this exercise, we combine the results generated by the student teams in Exercise 3 and then focus on some of the information that can be gotten from our efforts. The teacher combines the results from the four student teams in Exercise 3 using a large table (see Table XX for an example) drawn on the blackboard.

As the teacher records the information on the table, a student explains to the class why his team felt that a particular group should be scored as it was. For example, why did a team feel that teachers would mildly oppose a section limiting the length of a students hair?

As the teacher continues to fill in the cells of the table, the students should begin to see more clearly how certain groups are more strongly in favor of most sections of a dress code, while other groups are more likely to oppose most sections of it? (Look across the rows.) Also, one can see which sections of the code might be easier to change or get rid of. (Look down the columns.)

This table is the basis for a class discussion of the following questions:

1. What groups would seem to have the strongest opinions about the dress code? Are they generally in favor or opposed to its sections?
2. Which sections of the dress code would seem to be the easiest to change or do away with? The hardest to change?
3. Which group seems most opposed to the dress code?
4. Which group seems to favor the dress code the most?
5. What should be the strategy (plan of action) of group of students who were interested in changing parts of the dress code?

Table XX
SAMPLE ANALYSIS TABLE

		<u>SECTION OF DRESS CODE</u>			
<u>GROUPS INVOLVED</u>		Hair	Shoes	Upper Body Clothing	Face Paint
	Students				
	Parents				
	Teachers	<i>Oppose mildly</i>			
	Administrators				
	Board Members				
	Clergy				
	Employers- Managers				

EXERCISE 5: Getting Some Helpful Information - Let's Find Out What Others Think!

This exercise presents a set of questions that students might be interested in having the answers to regarding the dress code issue. The questions can be answered by having the students conduct a short survey of the students in their school. The teacher is encouraged to adapt this set of questions to the local situation. The survey could be of an entire class, the entire school, or some sample of classrooms or grades.

Questions Related to the Dress Code that Can Be Answered by a Survey

1. Are male or female students more likely to favor abolishing the school dress code?
2. Do black students favor changing the dress code more than white students?
3. Are students in the 7th, 8th, or 9th grades most likely to accept the dress code?
4. Students are more likely to want changes in which of the following areas: hair, shoes, face paint, upper body clothing?
5. Are students in the 7th, 8th, or 9th grades most likely to feel strongly about the dress code?

An Example of A Student Survey

The following is a survey being conducted by M _____'s class.
It concerns your opinions about our school dress code. Please check one answer
for each question.

1. Which grade are you in?

- ☐ 7th
- ☐ 8th
- ☐ 9th

2. What is your sex?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

3. What is your race?

- ☐ Black
- ☐ White
- ☐ Other

4. Which of these statements do you agree with most?

- ☐ The whole dress code should be completely abolished
- ☐ Parts of the dress code should be changed
- ☐ The dress code should not be changed at all.

5. How important do you feel it is to change the school dress code?

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Moderately important
- ☐ Slightly important
- ☐ Not important at all

6. If you could change only one part of the dress code, which one would you change?

- ☐ hair
- ☐ shoes
- ☐ face paint
- ☐ upper body clothes
- ☐ Others _____